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An Approach to Some Non-Clinical Responsibilities of Medicine

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"Experience teaches us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficent."

(JUSTICE BRANDEIS, 1928)

FOR the past two decades, especially, the medical profession has been the object of attack by politicians and schemers. Their purposes are camouflaged expertly by artists in deceit. Good will toward all and beneficence for all are promised by the words of these demagogues. Their actual purposes and actual motives, however, are directed toward the ultimate complete socialization of the state and degradation of our present society. Doctors of Medicine long have known the utter falseness of promises made by professional agitators of these schemes. People, however, in great numbers have been unable to realize what is being done under the guise of government benefaction.

Doctors as a group for many generations have been interested only in the scientific advance of medicine and in the clinical application of this knowledge to their patients. Secure in the knowledge of a job well done, charitable toward the shortcomings of people, complacent in the face of unjustified insults, the medical profession has ignored to a great extent its duties in the non-clinical aspects of the practice of medicine.

Hazlitt has said, "The way to procure insults is to submit to them. A man meets with no more respect than he exacts."

Realization of these truths has come finally to our profession. We are resolved to submit to no more insults and to exact the respect that fair dealing with our profession demands. As a group the American medical profession has embarked on an educa-

tional campaign to preserve the liberties of American citizens which are now being endangered progressively by apparent government beneficence. The action of our profession has been supported almost unanimously by the individual doctors of America. A pitiful, few, perennial dissenters and their professional liberal friends have opposed our action.

In prosecuting our crusade there are several things that we must realize definitely and then make decision.

We must realize:

1. That there is a definite threat and actual emergent problem before us which must be conquered or submitted to.
2. We must decide whether we intend to conquer or whether we will submit.
3. If we decide we will conquer we must lay out our plan of battle.
4. Given a plan which we accept, we must unite, unswervingly, in following that plan. The Bible says, "He that is not with us is against us."
5. If we be united each must then make the furtherance of our cause his first interest. All else must be secondary even though important.

Practically all thinking people are agreed that there is a problem before us all. Right now, peculiarly, liberty and socialized medicine are rivals for the people's favor. Unfortunately, due to carefully conditioned mental reactions, liberty apparently is dear to most people only up to a certain point—where they desire something more than they do liberty.

Nearly all the medical profession has decided that it will not submit to the socialization of medicine and its sequelae. We are determined that this degradation of medical care shall not be foisted on the people by default. Preliminary plans of battle have

been drawn and successfully have been carried out, so far, to defeat for the moment, political maneuvers and laws that have been proposed. Our attack thus far has involved, however, mainly a defensive opposition and has been interpreted as a negative attitude by our enemies and by the people who should be our allies. Holding the fort and staving off the emergent attack has been most of our battle so far. True it is, that voluntary prepayment sickness insurance has been elevated as the standard to which we will rally, but the actual coordination and the successful operation of these plans to great enough an extent has not been accomplished as yet. A specific, inclusive, iron-clad plan with understandable features must be developed and presented and it must be done soon.

Such a plan must meet the actual needs for medical service; it must be available to all; it must provide adequate remuneration to the physician; it must be offered and available to everyone so that the costs shall be reasonable and the payment cushioned against hardship. Such a plan must have the hearty cooperation of the medical profession. Above all, such a plan must circumvent, once and for all, politicians and schemers who intend to force medical care under domination of government whether there be need or not.

I believe that the acceptance of this non-clinical responsibility in meeting the needs, and settling this problem, is the greatest duty and at the same time the greatest opportunity that we who are now representing the medical profession may ever be privileged to undertake.

It is said that many doctors feel that submission by free people to the dictatorship of socialism is inevitable; that it is predestined or written in the stars for medicine to capitulate to decay. I am reminded of the words of Shakespeare when I see men of medicine degenerating into astrologers:

*"At some time, men are the masters of their fates.
The fault, dear Brutus, lies not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that, we are underlings."*

With these factors in mind I have sought long to formulate in my own mind an answer that would approach satisfaction. It has been most difficult. However, I have arrived finally at the decision that the following plan, admittedly skeleton in form and subject to perfection, would be efficient and equitable.

As a preamble to my proposal, I would read to you again the official statement of policy of the American Medical Association:

"The American Medical Association reaffirms its belief in the application of the principle of medical care insurance on a voluntary basis. The American Medical Association has encouraged and assisted the development of voluntary prepayment plans. Coverage is now provided throughout the country and protection is being extended rapidly to an ever increasing proportion of our population.

"The American people now enjoy the highest level of health, the finest standards of scientific medical

care and the best quality of medical institutions thus far achieved by any major country of the world.

"The great accomplishments of American medicine are the result of development by a free profession working under a free system, unhampered by governmental control.

"The experience of all countries where government has seized control of medical care has been progressive deterioration of the standards of that care to the serious detriment of the sick and needy.

"The American medical profession is unalterably opposed to the institution of any system of medical care which would result in damage to the American public. Our carefully considered opinion is that any scheme of political medicine would be a catastrophe for the American people.

"Compulsory sickness insurance, notwithstanding misleading bureaucratic propaganda, is a variety of socialized medicine or state medicine and possesses the evils inherent in any politically controlled system. It is contrary to American tradition, and is the first and most dangerous step in the direction of complete state socialism. The American Medical Association rejects any such scheme as a method of the distribution of medical care. We are equally certain that when the people understand the facts they also will reject it with the same finality.

"On the basis of experience, we are convinced that voluntary medical care insurance, with the continued support of the American medical profession, can and will solve the economic problem of the distribution of medical care within the existing framework of private enterprise.

"It has been demonstrated that the voluntary method provides a better and less costly service and avoids the imposition of enormous taxation. The continuing purpose and determination of the American Medical Association is to maintain and improve the standards of medical care and to make that care available to all our people."

This should be well publicized and carried as a preamble to all of our endeavors so that there may be no doubt as to the motives or purposes and intentions activating the medical profession in any and all of our activities.

I present, therefore, the following plan:

Each individual Doctor of Medicine shall be asked to pledge allegiance to the following dictum:

I pledge:

A. Objection to government controlled, political or socialized medicine.

1. In discussion of this pledge several things are of utmost importance. First, there must be no misunderstanding as to what the socialists really intend to do. They know that a government plan cannot succeed without the support of the doctors. They intend to force the medical profession to cooperate. This is very evident in the Warren Bill (SB 157) wherein the last paragraph provides that no doctor may accept, receive or obtain any remuneration from most (about 87 per cent) of the population in return for medical services, except that paid by the state. This would make most private practice illegal

under penalty of revocation of license for unprofessional conduct. Practice under these conditions would be slave labor and no less.

2. As long as the people desire my services and make it legal for me to do practice without coercion I will gladly make my services available. I do not intend to practice medicine under slavery conditions.

(This will serve due notice that no one need misinterpret. Having defined what we will not do we must then say as strongly what we will do, in order that the people may know that their doctors will always care for their patients unless the patients themselves, under foolish leadership, make it illegal for the Doctors of Medicine to so do.)

General Washington said, "We must raise a standard to which the wise and honest may repair." Therefore, following the statement of policy of the American Medical Association in its last paragraph, "The continuing purpose and determination of the American Medical Association is to maintain and improve the standards of medical care and to make that care available to all the people," I further pledge:

B. I will confirm and cooperate in all voluntary insurance plans as approved officially by the medical profession as represented by the American Medical Association. Approved plans should embody the following principles in formation:

1. There shall be established standards of benefits to the public which shall meet actual needs for medical care.

2. Determination of fair and adequate remuneration for the furnishing of services, by hospitals and the medical profession in the providing of these medical care needs of the people, shall be made.

3. Thereupon, determination shall be made by competent actuaries as to the cost of premiums to insure the delivery of such services.

4. Insurance companies and all prepaid medical and hospital plans shall be urged to develop and furnish such policies, and cautioned not to fix premiums or charges below sound actuarial minimums. People must not be deluded any more by demagogic promises that lead them to expect good service for nothing. We must give them the best service and show them that it is at a reasonable cost and at a cost that they can afford.

5. Agreement by hospitals and the physicians to accept and abide by these contracts shall be obtained. (The public shall be assured that when the patient abides by his contract and when he accepts only the benefits of the contract and does not in addition pay more to the hospital, for added services, the physician will make no added charge. If the patient desires added services outside his contract with the hospital and pays for obtaining them, then added charges by the physician may be expected as part of the contract. This would leave the decision as to added costs entirely to the will of the patient.)

6. Liaison shall be established between the medical profession, the public, insurance carriers, labor

organizations, and employers, with the purpose of enlisting support for all honest and bona fide voluntary plans.

Employers shall be urged to adopt plans whereby they shall pay one-half the premium and the employee one-half. This would be a fixed factor, subject to a constant estimate, and deductible under income tax laws, and therefore the actual cost to the employer would be less than the apparent cost. It should be pointed out that this would be much less cost than under the proposed socialized medicine plans where fixed percentage deductions and many hidden taxes would be obligated on the employer for all of his employees.

Individuals, either employed or unemployed, would have the same benefits available to themselves by paying the total premium if they desired.

If government wishes to enter the picture, it may, as has already been suggested, pay the premiums of indigents or temporarily incapacitated people who are sick. For this principle of subsidization has been established already in other endeavors.

But the true function of government should be to educate the public in regard to: (1) The facilities for care, the type of voluntary plans, the actual benefits that are available to all. (2) People must be shown how to subscribe to these plans and taught to seek the benefits when needed. (3) People must be taught how to use these plans when they have them. (4) Children in our schools should be taught the truth, that sickness is not an abnormal expectation during their lifetime and that they should plan to meet these problems as they arise.

If the government would really tell the truth about these things and teach people how to care for themselves, there would be no need for the compulsion of socialism.

7. The American Medical Association shall continue its present organization, and shall continue its advancement of scientific medical care, and the ethical control of the practice of medicine, to which all its members are bound.

I realize that this proposed plan of meeting the problem which is now confronting the people and the medical profession is not all new. It is a summation of absolute needs. It is compelling to me in its logic as a way to solve a problem which must be and will be solved eventually.

Even now our Congress and our State Legislature are struggling. Under the urging of a President and a Governor, they are deciding what may well be the placing of the last straw on the camel's back. A broken back still is a serious matter even with the best medical care. Without medical assistance it most often is fatal.

Shall medicine sit by and see all that we believe in perish? Shall we submit or conquer in this test to which we are put?

The old crusaders had a motto we all know, "In hoc signo vinces." Today we too must raise our standard.

Now, the doctor must come out boldly in his advo-

cacy of what he believes. He must become a crusader and a salesman, if you will, of voluntary sickness insurance. He must guarantee to the patient certain services and he must see to it that his guarantee is fulfilled.

This plan preserves all the cherished liberties and prerogatives of both the public and the medical profession. It provides a voluntary plan that may be used by all, rich or poor. It preserves the patient-to-doctor relationship. It retains the incentive for the doctor to be the best doctor and to build his practice under his own capabilities. It preserves the American way of life and individual enterprise. It slaps in the face those who contend that free people under liberty cannot care for themselves and must become creatures of the state under a socialized dictatorship.

There are those of us who are fearful; they ask, "Can we be *certain* that this is the answer? Can we be *certain* that the government will allow us to do this? Can we be *certain* that it will work? Can we be *certain* that we should not bow our heads and accept now the stroke of the sword of communism?"

I answer in the words of George Eliot . . .

*"Nay, never falter: no great deed is done
By falterers who ask for certainty.
No good is certain, but the steadfast mind,
The undivided will seek the good:
'Tis that compels the elements, and wrings
A human music from the indifferent air.
The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero. Say we fail—
We feed the high tradition of the world,
And leave our spirit in other breasts."*

